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THE  
S I N F U L N E S S  
OF  
P L A Y S.

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A R G U M E N T Iſt.

**G**OD allows no *time* for them, *six days* are allowed for *labour*, *one* for *piety*, but none for *Play*.

Argu. 2d. As *idols* are *sinful* in *devotion*, so are *Plays* in *diverſion*. Proof. Plays are generally made up of *profanenefs*; *extravagant thoughts*, *wild rants*, *blasphemous ſpeeches*, *wanton amours*, *profane jeſts*, and *impure paſſions*. They that deny this don't know what Plays are. 'Tis true, they are not *all alike*, but *none* are *good*. The knowledge of GOD in Chriſt reconciled true *religion*, *devotion*; *piety* are taught in *none*, and the generality are perfectly *profane*. Now theſe things are as directly contrary to *chriſtianity*, both in *temper* and *action* as *darkneſs* is to *light*, or ~~then~~ *Satan* ~~is~~ to *God*.

Argu. 3d. Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth.

The *third command* is not more directly againſt *profane ſwearing*, than *this* is againſt the *corrupt communication* that proceeds out of the mouth of an actor on the Stage.

Argu. 4th. You would think it very *abſurd*, and directly *contrary* to *piety*, to give your money to hear people *curſe* and *ſwear*; and 'tis juſt as *abſurd*, and as contrary to *modeſty*, to give your money to hear people talk *impudently*.

Argu. 5th. When you ſee Players acting with *boldneſs*, *profanenefs*, and *immodeſty*, I dare ſay you never ſuſpect

pect them to be persons of *piety*, and had rather see your son or daughter in *any honest employment*, however mean, than acting on a Stage! *Piety and Plays are incompatible.*

Argu. 6th. If a person was to collect all the *wicked, profane, blasphemous, lewd, impure, detestable* things spoken in a Play-house, in *one season only*, it would appear to be such a mass of sin, as would justify any one in saying, that the business of a Player is one of the most *detestable and injurious professions* in the whole world.

Argu. 7th. *They* that would not speak those *detestable things themselves* should not pay *others* for speaking them: if they do they are partakers of *their sins*, and that exactly as they would partake of any *good work* which they pay others for doing. We allow this in things praise worthy, why not in *vice*?

Argu. 8th. Exactly as a *place of worship* may be called the *House of God*, so a *Playhouse* a place of profaneness may be called the *synagogue of Satan*. God is pleased with *piety*, and the Devil with *profaneness*. God is pleased with *divine hymns*, the Devil with *lewd songs*. God is pleased with the *preaching of the pure gospel*, and the Devil with *corrupt discourses*. God is pleased with  *fervent prayer*, the Devil with *horrid imprecations*. God is pleased when men are *sorry for sin*, the Devil is pleased when they make a *mock* of sin. God is pleased when we turn to him again by *Christ crucified*, and the Devil is pleased when we *crucify Christ again*. In one word, God is pleased when men go to *church*, and the Devil is pleased when they go to the *Playhouse*.

The Church is appointed to teach us what is *good*, and the Playhouse to teach us what is *evil*. The Church for the *sacraments*, the Playhouse for ~~the~~ *sacrilege*. The Church to make men of *sound minds*, the Playhouse to make men of *corrupt minds*. In short the *Church* is calculated to get men to *Heaven*, but the *Playhouse* to send them to *Hell*.

*Profane speeches, lewd songs, and places* appointed for such things among *Christians*, are much more acceptable to *Satan*, than the same things among *heathens*, and shews *his* victory in a *Christian land*. *Baal's followers* are many; but the *followers of the Lord Jesus Christ* are few, the more is the pity!

Argu.

Argu. 9th. This is not the state of the Playhouse thro' any *accidental abuse*, as any thing good may be abused; but *corruption of mind*, and *debauchery of manners* are the *natural effects* thereof.

If evil arises from our *doing our duty*, we must bear it and not be *frightened at reproach*; but if *evil* follows any thing which we do or *encourage*, as the natural consequence thereof, we have the same share of *guilt* as we give *encouragement*, and without *repentance* and *amendment* prevent, we shall have the *same share of endless punishment*.

The *money* we give, the *pleasure* we take, and the *frequency* of our *presence* at such scenes, are the three great parts by which we *encourage* them, and if we invite *others* we add to our *guilt* and *punishment*.

Argu. 10th. If we plead the *numbers* that go to such places, it only shews the greater conquest which satan, by sin and folly has made, and should be so far from an *encouragement* for us to go to, that it should increase our *sorrow* and make us the more *watchful* and *steadfast* "not to follow a *multitude* to do evil."

Argu. 11th. If any for an excuse plead *religion*, saying, "We never go in the week before the *sacrament*, we "don't omit any *duty* at *Church*" or at home, and we always go in *good company*, &c. I answer, This does not shew the *Stage* less *Sinful*, nor the *hearts* of such persons to be less *wicked*, but that *religion* is made a meer *hypocritical cloak*, to cover all.—

As *multitudes* did not save the whole world from drowning, nor the *pretence* of piety make the use of *images* among *Papists* less *Sinful*; so *neither* will it prevent such persons from being *miserable* in *eternity*. For, "If any man love not the Lord *Jesus Christ* let him be *accursed*." And if any do love the Lord, he will keep his *commandments*, not one of which is to see *Plays*, but just the *reverse*. "Turn ye, turn ye from your *evil ways*." And the prayer of a good person is, "Turn away mine *eyes* from beholding *vanity*."—"If any man love the *World* the law of the *Father* is not in him."—"And be ye *holy*, for I am *holy* saith the Lord."—"And  
"without

"without holiness no man shall see the Lord." But is a Playhouse a place calculated to make men holy? Or have we time so plentiful and certain that we can fool it away? The Devil himself, liar as he is, cannot say yes: it is too contrary to truth for any to assert it. Did any man ever find Christ at a Playhouse? Or the pardon of his Sins? or Holy Heavenly Desires? No, but just the contrary.

*Vanity* is opposite to piety, as is folly to wisdom, and Plays to prayers.

A polite writer ridicules a lady's pretensions to piety by saying,

Together lie the Prayer Book and Paint,  
At once t'improve the Sinner and the Saint.

I add,

Together are erected Church and Stage,  
At once t'improve and to corrupt the Age.

What a pity!—Scripture says, "Ye cannot be partakers  
"at the Lord's table, and at the table of Devils." And are not profane speeches, lewd songs, wanton gestures, &c. Satan's entertainments?

How then can such people pretend to piety? He that looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery in his heart; and does not the practice of a woman's acting on the Stage directly promote heart adultery? In short, as true religion is in the heart or no where, so Plays tend directly to corrupt the heart with unholy desires, and consequently to destroy true religion there and banish it at last from the world. And I will venture to say, that if every person loved Plays there would be none that love Christ, the holy immaculate Lamb of God! And of course, there would be no true religion in the world. 'Tis true, there might be the name and the form but not the power of religion; not purity of heart.

Argu. 12th. If any were to ridicule the sacraments, we should think them abominably profane; but they that can profane the name of God, and destroy holiness of heart are abundantly more profane, in the same proportion as the end is greater than the means, or the substance than the shadow. For the sacraments are nothing in fact, unless

unless they, in the use of them, produce *holiness of heart and life*.

Argu. 13th. It is a great *aggravation* of the guilt of the Stage, that *women* are employed to lay aside the peculiar and ornament of their sex, *sincere* and *strict modesty*. If we were to see a company of *Clergymen* ridiculing the sacred rites of religion, in order to entertain an audience with *eloquence*, we should be *astonished*! And should easily see the *additional* aggravation because performed by *Clergymen*. Just so is the state of the Stage. *Women* are as *particularly* called to *singular modesty*, as *Clergymen* to *singular piety*. And if it be wrong for any women so far to forget themselves as to *perform* those unseemly parts, it is proportionably wrong to *encourage* them by our *pay* or *presence*.

Argu. 14th. If *holy Angels* attend us in *divine assemblies*, we may be sure that *Devils* do in these *heathenish, profane assemblies*; and who would chuse such company? Then who should like such places? No one. Again: We think it dreadful to hear of witches and wizards having their *evil spirits* attending them *visibly*, called familiars, but is it not as dreadful to have them attending us, *certainly*? Who would like to run the *hazard* of such company?

The way of *duty* is the way of *safety*.

The way of *doubt* is the way of *danger*.

The way of *sin* is the way of *sorrow*.

The way of *purity* is the way to *glory*.

*Chuse life*, that you may live FOR EVER.

Argu. 15th. Our *pleasures* in *life* shew the *state* of our *souls*.

Pleasures in *sacred music*, shew a soul *piously* harmonious.

Pleasures in *charity*, shew a soul *bountiful*.

Pleasures in removing *misery*, shew a soul of *humanity*.

Pleasures in any creature's *pain*, shew a soul *cruel*.

Pleasures in *folly*, shew a soul *weak* and *foolish*.

And Pleasures in *profaneness*, shew a soul *wicked*.

Argu.

Argu. 16th. Lastly, A few extracts from great men.

1st. Archbishop TILLOTSON—"As the Stage now is, Plays are *intolerable*, and not fit to be admitted in a *civilized*, much less a *Christian* nation; they do most *notoriously* administer to *Infidelity* and *vice*—and therefore I do not see how any person *pretending* to *sobriety* and *virtue*, and *especially* to the *pure* and *holy* religion of our *Blessed Saviour*, can, without great *guilt*, and open contradiction to his holy profession, be *present* at such *lewd* and *immodest* Plays, as too many are, who yet would take it very ill to be *shut* out of the *community* of *Christians*, as they certainly *would* have been in the *first* and *purest* ages of *christianity*."

2d. JUDGE HALE—"In the seventeenth year of his age he was sent to *Oxford*, he was a great proficient while at *school*, and for *some time* at *Oxford*, 'till the *Stage Players* came there. He was so much corrupted by *seeing Plays*, that he almost *forsook* his *studies*. By this he not only lost *much time*, but found that his mind was filled with *vain images* of things; and being afterwards sensible of the *mischief* of this, he resolved *never to see another Play*; to which resolution he constantly adhered."

3d. Our PRESENT ARCHBISHOP—"I have ever been an *enemy* to such *bills* (*viz.* for Playhouses) being persuaded that the establishment of *Playhouses* tends to *increase licentiousness*, and that they are equally *injurious* to the *morals* and *property* of the people."

Those who can withstand such *authorities* and such *reasons*, what will they not withstand, but **DEATH, JUDGMENTS, and GOD.**

F I N I S.

